

Peck's Bad Boy in an Airship

BY HON. GEORGE W. PECK

ENLISTING IN THE NAVY

When our rebellion that sailed from St. Louis came down in December, and I had bid adieu to the two men whom I sailed with, and they had paid me good money for my services and keeping them awake. I thought of that fact we had passed several Fortress Monroe, the fortification where battle ships, and I was afraid I could not get there before it ended and sacrifice my birth, and I had made up my mind to go with it around the basin and help fight Japan or mosquitoes, or any old thing that came in the way, so I took the first train to Fort Monroe, and found that the whole population of several nearby states were on the road, the president was making his review the fleet names in review.

The next day I was at the hotel at Old Point and with hundreds of other people took a bath and went out along the bathhouse. Everybody was anxious to see around the ships and we could see out of them and hear about all over the vessels by the uniformed people.

There was a bathhouse on the banks of the river and a man from the restaurant stood looking below the water line and as he hung consideration of an eligible bathhouse, a bather pulled a rock from a wharf-side wrecker, or perhaps hence a black mark about a dozen feet above it to the proper name of a swimmer neither me nor a bather said a word, a tall fat and a fatuous sergeant, and a private about a gaudy jail and an apartment house with rooms to let on the waterfront also, and all of it in an iron coffin ready to go to the bottom any minute if the art tanks are punctured.

Now I was about about to be alone except in a hospital without any like presence, and when I went up on deck where I could jump over board if she began to sink, there

were liable to sink if the wind got out of the tanks, and was never so proud in my life as I was when I saw the jacks climb up on the rigging and hang on like monkeys, lined up like they were drilling on deck, and when the Connecticut began to fire a salute to the president, out of those great iron sewer pipes, and all the rest of the fleet began to shoot at the air, the noise was so loud that it made your head feel like you do when you take sedative powders, and it gallups up your nose, and the smokeless powder made the smoke so thick you couldn't see anything but the president's teeth, as he sailed along on his yacht, and I got so patriotic that the chills went



When It Exploded the Jap Was the Scaredst Person I Ever Saw.

up my back like when you have the grip coming on, and then the smoke cleared away and when a million American flags were flung to the breeze, I began to choke up like you do when you are sick and the callers say, "Well, brace up, boy, you may pull through, but there are a hundred chances against your living till morning," and the tears rolled down my cheeks, and my throat got full like I had the tonsilitis and everybody else on our launch except two Japanese were crying, and then the president's yacht took a position, and all the battleships swung into line and marched past, and the bands played and we all just cheered for patriotic joy, and I was so mad to see those Japanese standing there like barbs of razor oil, not even smiling, that I blew up a toy balloon which I have been playing air ship with, and I whacked it on the head of the nearest looking boy, and when it exploded he was the scariest looking person I ever saw, because he thought one of those 10-inch shells had gone off in his hat, and everybody said, "Saved him right," and then he laughed, the first time since the review started, and he wanted the skin of my toy balloon as a souvenir of the first gun fired in the war with Japan.

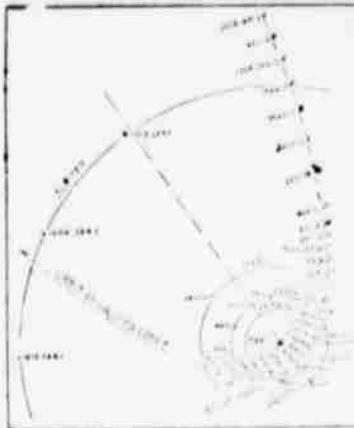
From that day, when I had examined critically our fleet and seen it sail, and monkey around the president, I felt so patriotic that I wanted to fight for my country, and I could hardly wait two days for Mr. Evans to send his launch ashore after me, and I didn't care if the whole thing was true, that couldn't float under natural conditions and if Mr. Evans should put our locks on bar or rail road iron and put me on it, with orders to go to sink a Japanese sampans or whatever they call their war ships, I would step aboard that bar of rail road iron with a light heart, wave my hat and tell them all to go plumb.

So we went ashore, and that evening there was a ball at the hotel, and all the officers of the navy were there, and the army, and millions of ladies with clothes on the lower half of them, and talcum powder and black court shoes on the upper half, and the way they danced and waltzed and flirted and of monsters would make you dizzy, and when Bob Evans walked impurely by me, with a 200-pound lady on one arm, and a 90-pound girl on the other side of him, I was so full of patriotic fire I couldn't help saying: "Hello, Bob, I will be on deck all night, and he looked at me with an expression on his face that looked as though he had drawn a lobster that had been dead too long, and he matched along with his female procession, and the orchestra struck up a good night waltz, and everybody waltzed, and took some drinks, and went home to wait the sailing of the fleet the next day, and I went to bed with an order to be called at sunrise, so I could be on the porch with my ticket in my hand, ready to jump into the launch when she whistled and sail away "for a frolic or a fight," and I didn't care which.

Well, say, this was quick work, and I called a launch and visited the other vessels promising to be Johnny on the spot at the appointed hour. It was a great sight to see the review, when the president came along on the yacht Mayflower and I forgot all about the battleships being of

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HALLEY'S COMET DUE IN 1910



The Orbit of Halley's Comet, 1910, after its Passage in December, 1909.



Newton.

No one need be at all surprised if two years hence, the nations of the world suddenly become a family of ardent skywatchers, for in 1910 the return of a certain periodic comet is promised, one lost to mortal eye since 1755. The reverent aspirations of this celestial object are endowed with a fiery antiquity, since they stretch back over eight centuries of the lives and doings of pony men. At the date of its recurrence in 1682 it was observed and studied by Edmund Halley, a famous English astronomer and colleague of the illustrious Newton. After laborious research he reached the conclusion as the result of arithmetic calculations relating to its perturbations, that the comet was a thing in space identical with the cometary apparitions of 1531 and 1607. He framed a table of the motion of comets.

In the making of which I have spared no labor that it might come forth perfect as a thing consecrated to posterity, and to last as long as the science of astronomy itself.

By reason of the fact that the comet's reappearance once again to human vision was predicted by Halley for the end of 1758, or beginning of 1759—I dare venture to foretell that it will return again in 1910," were his words—it is universally and properly known as Halley's comet. The author of this grand and novel discovery appertaining to the pedigree and identity of a comet from which so much knowledge in astronomy has since sprung did not himself live to scan the heavens on that memorable Christmas day in 1758 when, true to prediction, the comet appeared, visible to the naked eye, and seen in many lands.

Halley died at Greenwich in 1742 at the ripe age of 86, and was buried at Lee, in Kent. An inscription on his tombstone records that with his dearest wife there repose by far the chief astronomer of his age, and adds these pregnant words: "That you may know, reader, what kind of, and how great a man he was, read the multitudinous writings with which he has illustrated, adorned and amplified nearly all the arts and sciences."

The records of history provide us with a variety of details respecting the apparitions of the comet we are led to expect in 1910. In 1607 its appearance was considered to be an omen in the sky presaging England's conquest by William of Normandy in 1456. It was a wonderful object and covered nearly 70 degrees of the heavens, being visible for a month; moreover, it was for a time circumpolar, so that it could be seen above the northern horizon all night. When it came again in 1531 it found America discovered, printing invented, and the Reformation begun. As we already know it was foreseen for its cycle of 1758. At its last return in 1845 it was first observed at Rome on August 5, and afterwards was visible to the naked eye throughout October, possessing a tail from 20 degrees to 30 degrees long. It passed within 4,500 miles of the earth.

Regarding the 1910 apparition, Prof. H. C. Wilson of Goodsell Observatory, thinks it possible that some one with the aid of a great telescope or a photographic camera may catch sight of the expected visitor during the winter of 1909-10. That, indeed, we may even begin to search for it this present month. Almost certainly it may be found by September or October, 1910. It is to be noted, however, that it will then be only a small nebula, whatever tail it has being in a position directly behind it as seen from the earth.

The wonderful gaseous streamer which we call a comet's tail increases in luminosity as the comet approaches the Sun—that is to say, the point in its orbital travel when it is nearest the sun. This comet matter is of varying but enormous length; indeed, we must think of comet's tails in terms of millions of miles. Donati's comet of 1858 reached a length of 60 degrees, and swept as a broad curved

MISSSED POINT OF INTEREST.

When Howells Failed to See Birthplace of Famous Man.

It was fit that on our way to Boston in England we should pause in passing through Cambridge. That was quite as we should have done at home, and I can only wish now that we had paused longer, though every moment that kept us from Boston would have been a loss. There it was all gain, and all joy, the gay September 24 that we went this divine journey. My companion was that companionable archaeologist who had guided my steps in search of the American origins in London, and who was now to help me follow the Pilgrim Fathers over the ground where they sojourned when they were only the Pilgrim Sons. At divers places on the way, after we left London, he pointed out some scene associated with American saints or heroes. We traversed the region that George William Curtis people came from, hard by Roxburgh, and Eliot, the apostle to the Indians; again we skirted the Ralph Waldo Emerson country, with its big market town of Bishop's Stortford; and beyond Ely, where we stopped for the cathedral and a luncheon, not unworthy of it, at the station, he started me from a pleasant drowsie I had fallen into in our railway carriage, with the cry:

"There! That is where Capt. John Smith was born!" "Where?" Where? I implored too late, looking round the compartment everywhere. "Back where those children were." That was the nearest I came to seeing one of the most famous Virginian origins—W. D. Howells, in Harper's Magazine.

A Taste for Necrology.

The east side school teacher had been telling her small class some facts concerning the life of Lincoln, and she was now asking the children to repeat to her such incidents of the story as they had understood and remembered. One little boy volunteered the information that President Lincoln was dead. Immediately a very small girl in the front row raised her hand and waved it energetically.

"Well, Sarah," asked the teacher, "what did you want to say?"

"Please ma'am," exclaimed Sarah, "Mr. Leibowitz in our street—he's dead, too!"

To Protect American Patents.

Arrangements will soon be perfected for the proper protection of American patents in Japan. At present the Japs appropriate anything they fancy.